Bit Age Times

Table of Contents

Great Console Battles!

To all the youngsters who thought that console wars is a new thing, HAH! They have been going on as long as there has been video game competition. Here is a look at some of the biggest game console battles that were fought at the stores, on the playgrounds and most recently on the internet! I put them in chronological order.

1. **Atari vs Intellivision**-This was the granddaddy of game system battles! In one corner you had Atari who was owned by Warner Communications with their deep pockets, tons of arcade game translations and a head start. In the other corner you had the more graphically superior Intellivision who was owned by Mattel. This battle got ugly as their were even negative commercials on television (good old George Plimpton showing how superior the Intellivision games were). It was alot like a political race! Atari won the first game battle.

2. **Colecovision vs Atari 5200**-The battle of the supersystems! Coleco came out first and really had a nice set of arcade hits like Donkey Kong and Zaxxon! But the Atari 5200 boasted an all-star lineup of arcade favorites like Pac-man, Joust, Pole Position and Dig Dug, none of which were available for the Coleco. While the Coleco won the battle, the video game crash ended any chance of the Atari making a comeback (not that the buggy joysticks of the 5200 helped matters at all).

3. [Nintendo vs Sega Master System](#)-The first of the Nintendo versus Sega battles, this one was over before it began. To give you an idea, Nintendo had 95% of the video game market and Sega and Atari (with the 7800) shared the other 5%, with Sega getting the lion's share of that. Never has one system so dominated.

4. [Turbo Grafx vs the Sega Genesis](#)-The battle of the 16 bit systems is what it was billed as. I still remember how they made their way to fairs and malls to promote the systems. While I liked the Turbo better, the Sega Genesis won out. Part of it was due to tremendous marketing! The Sega screams ads were legendary.
Also, games like Sonic, Ecco and others and a tremendous selection of sports games and arcade hits gave it a huge advantage over the poor Turbo, which was never supported well over here in the states.

5. [Gameboy vs Sega Game Gear vs Atari Lynx](#)-The battle for handheld supremacy was a bloody battle. While all three systems did fairly well, the black and white (actually green) system wtih no backlight and the smallest screen won out. The Gameboy beat the other two technologically superior systems for two reasons, selection of games and battery life. The Gameboy could get 30 hours out of a set of batteries, where the other two would have gone through 4 pairs of batteries or more. Also, only the Gameboy came out with Tetris, the huge hit at the time! Add in Super Mario, Zelda and other Nintendo only games and you have a winning line-up!

6. [Sega Genesis vs the Super Nintendo](#)-While alot is made of this battle, it really wasn't as big a battle as indicated. By the time the Super Nintendo appeared on the market, the Sega Genesis had been around for a few years and sold most of the units it was going to. The market for the Sega Genesis was pretty saturated when the the Super Nintendo came along. You have to remember that the Genesis had already battled out with the 8-Bit Nintendo and the Turbo Grafx, so this was more like the aged fighter going against the new up and coming fighter. The Super Nintendo ended up selling more units, but I don't think you can say it won the battle. Nintendo also kept it going long after the many people moved onto 32 bit systems.

7. [Sony Playstation vs the Sega Saturn](#)-While there were other systems that came out before or around this time (Atari Jaguar, 3DO, CDI), it was really a two horse race and not much of a race to speak of. The Saturn came out first and took an early lead. But when the Playstation came out, it quickly passed the Saturn and never looked back. The race was over quickly and even the last ditch efforts of Sega (3 free games with the system) could save it. A pity as the Saturn was a very good system.

8. [Sony Playstation vs the Nintendo 64](#)-While the Nintendo made a valiant charge at the beginning, it had little chance. The cartridges made programming for it an expensive proposition, so there was never a ton of 3rd party support like the Playstation enjoyed. Also, it took so long to come out that the Playstation had such a huge market share that it had no chance of ever catching up.

Make Mine Smaller

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

Over the years, we've seen many systems come and go. But there have been quite a few systems that changed before they went. Over the lifespan of the machine, manufacturing

techniques and chip design allowed designers to create a machine with a smaller footprint than the original. Let's look back.
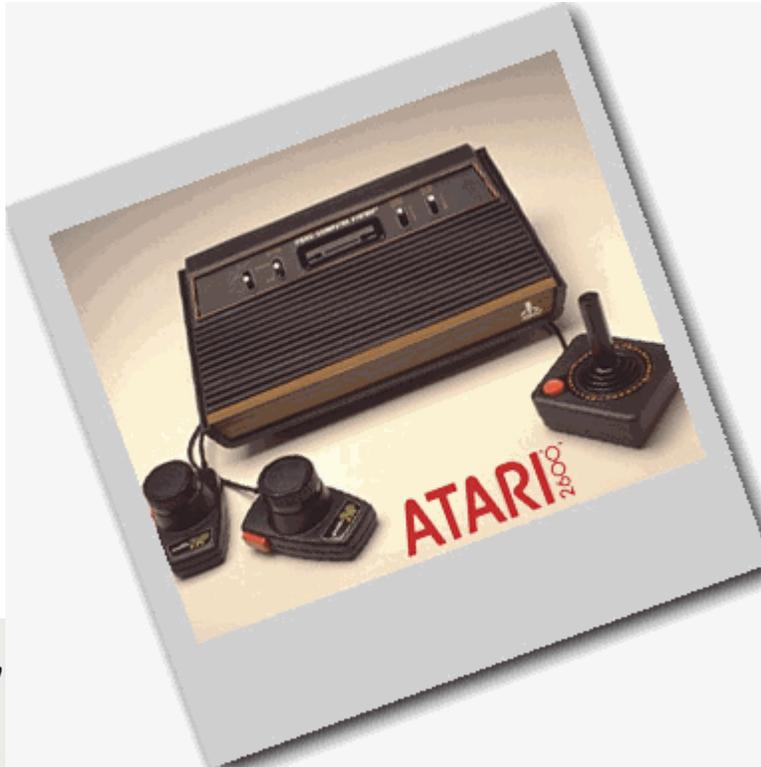
Atari 2600

The original, woodgrain design of the Atari 2600 was replaced later in its life by the black and silver Atari 2600 jr. Most recently, the Atari 2600 portable was created (VCSp). You can check it out at http://www.geocities.com/funmazer/

Intellivision

The original brown and gold monster was replaced by the half-sized grey design. Oddly, the INTV III returned the machine to its larger size.

Nintendo Entertainment System

A tremendous improvement from its original "I'm-going-to-wear-out-so-you-have-to-blow-on-the-cartridges" to its mini, top-loading design. The only issue with the smaller designed unit was its dog bone shaped controllers.

Sega Master

The Sega Master not only became smaller, but they incorporated an Alex Kidd game into it as well.

Genesis/Sega CD

Through three iterations of shrinkage, the Genesis probably changed the most. The first shrink (Genesis 2) left it with full functionality, but made it look weird when some of the add-ons were attached (like the Power Base convertor). The Genesis 3, made by Majesco, isn't much bigger than the case the cartridges came in. But they removed Sega CD and 32x support. To better facilitate the Genesis 2, the Sega CD was changed from a bottom mounted unit to a side mounted. Oddly, this design took up more space. My personal favorite redesign was the Sega CD/Genesis Combo called the CDX. It was about the size of your standard portable CD player with a cart slot on the back. Very nice. And you can't mention redesigns and shrinkage of the Genesis without mentioning the portable Genesis, the Nomad.

Turbografx 16

The Turbografx 16 is the oddball in this discussion. Originally debuting in Japan as the PC-Engine, the Turbo actually increased in size when it appeared on US shores. I can only guess that NEC wanted to make it appear that you were getting as much equipment for your money and the NES and Genesis. The CD add-on was eventually incorporated into its design and made a single unit called the Turbo Duo. It really didn't change in size too much, but the design certainly looked better. There was also a portable Turbografx 16, the Turbo Express that was about the size of the Gameboy, only thicker.

Super NES

Not that the original design was that big to begin with, the second generation unit did shrink a little. I miss the eject button though.

Playstation

The latest machine to go under the shrink ray. This 5 year old system is thinner, lighter and smaller that its big brother. They should have made it Red, Blue and Yellow and called it "My First Playstation".

Gameboy

The "game-machine-that-would-not-die" has gotten smaller and added color over its 10 year life span. A new design is on the horizon that retains the name, but will in essence be a brand new machine.

Lynx

Smaller and squarer.

Should you look to add one of the later machines to your collection if you already own one ? I'd lean towards answering yes and here's why. Over the life of a machine, improvements have been made to increase the quality of the machine. How many Playstations had their lens-tracking go away because of heat ? During the life of the Playstation, there were several internal redesigns to thwart the overheating problem as well as trying to limit piracy. If you're like me, smaller machines take up less shelf space. So it's easier to get all your systems on a single entertainment center. Right now, on the entertainment center in my office, I have 14 different systems set up and ready to go. Many of them are the smaller resigned units.

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 4 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred can be reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net).

They Finally Got it Right!

After more than a decade of making comic book related games, they finally got it right! They have finally been able to capture the feel of being a superhero and the atmosphere of a comic book. No, I am not talking about that horrible Superman game for the Nintendo 64, but rather Spiderman for the Playstation!

If you own a Playstation, then you need to get this game! You really get a good idea of what it is like to be Spiderman. You can climb walls, swing from building to building and shoot different kinds of webs (unlike earlier games that allowed you to shoot a web or make a shield). This time around, you can shoot a web to swing from, including a quick shot to the ceiling, cover your hands with webgloves, make a cocoon to protect you from harm and throw web balls! A big improvement over earlier versions!

The game is broken into different levels and each one has an objective. Some involve fighting bad guys like the Scorpion and Doctor Octopus, who provide quite a challenge! One of the nice features is that while you are roaming around the city, there is a compass that helps direct you to where you need to go. This keeps you from wandering aimlessly around the city.

The graphics are great and there are some other characters from the Spiderman comics that pops up, including Black Cat who shows up right off the bat! Proof that the Playstation still has alot of life left in it! Just makes you wonder why it took so long for someone to get a comic book related video game right and when will the next one be out?

From Right Handed to Left Handed

If there is one thing that the Bit Age did, it was to turn us from right handed game players to left handed ones. In the early days of joysticks, look at the fire buttons and you will find it was usually on the left side, so you could hold the joystick in your right hand. Since the majority of the world is right handed, go with the odds, right?

Well, this trend abruptly stopped with the Nintendo. Now the movement of your character shifted from the right to the left hand and is never came back. So we all had to learn to become adept with our left hand. No more having one big macho arm and one small weaker one.

Of course this is all moot now. With so many buttons and so many other things, you need three or four hands to have a fighting chance at these games. So it doesn't matter if you are right handed or left handed, you are overwhelmed! Guess progress does have a price to pay, even in video games.

I Was a Teenage Altered Beast

As I looked out at the coming mob, all I could think of was my beloved. Even with my life only moments from the end, I kept thinking how could I save her from this horrible wizard? I then yelled out to the crowd that he was an evil wizard and how he had stolen my love and how I was on a mission to save her and bring her back to her father. But they did not hear my pleas, they did not hear a voice of reason. All they heard was the howls of a wolf, the fearful baying of a mad animal that had killed many people and intended to kill more. Instead of coming to my aid, all I did was fill their hearts with fear and increase their bloodlust. Now more than ever, I was a vicious animal and needed to be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Before the people could charge forward with their attack, the wizard raised his hands and motioned for all of them to halt. He then spoke in a deep and forceful voice. "This creature is too great for mere mortals to deal with. Stay back and allow me to subdue the beast, before anymore blood is shed." He then gazed deep into my eyes as he brought his hands down from above his head. The crowd moved a few feet back and gave him a wide berth. Nothing like the threat of bloodshed, especially theirs, to keep them at bay. He then walked forward a few steps and a devilish smile came across his face. Knowing the danger he presented, I prepared to lunge forward and tear his throat out. But before I could execute my ill thought plan, I put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a handful of powder. He lifted his hand and blew it at me. Within seconds, the powder had covered my face and went into my mouth and nose and filled my lungs. At first it just angered me, but in a few seconds, I felt groggy and my body became quite heavy. I reached forward, towards the wizard, but each movement was sapping me of my fast depleting strength. Soon my limbs were too weak to hold up my weight and I fell to the ground and no matter how hard I tried, I could not bring my arms and legs to lift me up. Soon the mob was on top of me, beating me with their clubs and fists. Blackness soon engulfed me and with it, relief from the beating I was taking.

For what felt like an eternity, I slept a deep sleep. But soon I was awaken by a burning sensation. As my senses were slowly regained, I realized that I was back in my mortal form and tied to a stake. Around me, the kindling was burning and the flames had begun to reach my exposed skin. In the distance, I saw the wizard and my beloved being married. I struggled to break free, but my tired body would not aid me. I was stuck to watch the worst possible scenario unfold before my eyes. I screamed and screamed as the flames came upon me. Then as I felt like everything was lost, I awoke from a great sleep. I stood up and all around me was my small cottage. I was in bed and I was not hurt. I rose from the bed and quickly got dressed.

The village was teeming with excitement. Many of the young men were lining up, preparing to go forth and save poor Penelope. As I walked towards the crowd, one of the guys asked me where was my sword. I just looked at him smiled. Then I walked past all the men with their visions of glory and love and went up to the unsuspecting Ugnalia and grabbed her and gave her the biggest and deepest kiss of her life. She may not be much to look at, but at least I don't have to worry about fighting a crazed wizard for her.

The End

Here are two more deserving sites for your surfing pleasures! So head over and enjoy yourself!

Destination Sega
As the name says, it is an all Sega site! They have game reviews of the Genesis, Dreamcast and Saturn. There is interviews, news, trivia and more for the Sega fanatic. So head over and take a look at a really cool site! Here is the URL:

http://www.dimension-s.com/

Otaku World Presents Import Games
If you are like me, then you want to know what games we never got here in the states. Many great games are not brought over and here is a site that has news, reviews and cheats of many imports for the Playstation, Saturn, Nintendo 64 and the Super Famicom (or Super Nintendo as it was called here). While this list is far from complete, it does have alot of games on it and it is a nice place to get an idea about some of the import games available. Here is the URL:

http://otakuworld.com/games/index.html?/games/0games.html
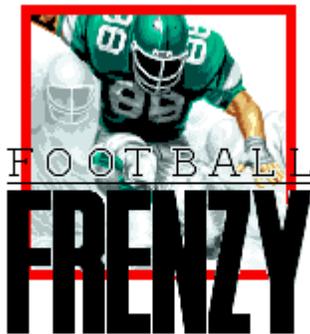
Neo Geo Review

This month I am going to review a football game. Since football season is in high gear, it seems only appropriate. The only football game that I know of on the Neo Geo is Football Frenzy, one of those bash and smash games that are all the rage now. Think of High Impact Football and you have a decent idea of the game.

One of the first things you will notice is the interesting names for the teams. With nicknames like the Hitmen and the Scuds, it seems like the predecessor of the XFL that is around the corner. As you can tell by the names, the teams are all fictional.

(I could make a toasted cheese sandwich in the time it takes this guy to get down the field)

The gameplay is sorta slow, compared to today's games, but still fun. It falls somewhere between NFL Blitz and 10 Yard Fight to give you an idea. Your guys sorta move along in a leisurely pace like 10 Yard Fight, but the hits and the close up camera angles of the hard hits are more like Blitz.

There is a decent amount of plays, but nothing like what is available now. You have your run and pass plays and kicking plays. Nothing too fancy, just your typical stuff. Like the Blitz series, there is a fair amount of stomping after plays. I personally think this detracts from the gameplay, but I guess I am more of a purist than a violence monger. To each his own, I guess.

(A close-up of the action that is ready to take place!)

The graphics and sounds are good, but not great. If you look at the era it came from (it was made in 1992), it is quite good. But, like most sports games, it doesn't stand up to the test of time. That is one flaw with most sports games, when they get older, they get very dated and unlike a good shooter or RPG, they just aren't as appealing. But if you want a fun little football game, it isn't a bad time waster. Just don't expect to play it too much as you will soon move onto your newer football games.

The Grand Finale

I must say that this is probably the final issue of Bit Age Times. Well, at least for the immediate future. While I enjoyed it, there has been many changes in my life and I unfortunately don't have the time that I once did. Plus, I never received the writing support that I had hoped for. With only one regular writer, it was too much of a burden for me to keep coming up with stuff. I

did not have the luxury that I have with Retrogaming Times, where I could do a handful of articles one month and with all the submissions, it didn't matter. So while the newsletter did well and did have a very solid readership, I am putting it on hiatus. I hope that down the road, I will get the urge to once again put it out, but I am making no promises. I hope you enjoyed the run and keep reading Retrogaming Times as it will continue to come out! Thanks and enjoy your bit age games!

Tom Zjaba